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DUTCH INTERIOR
By Kever

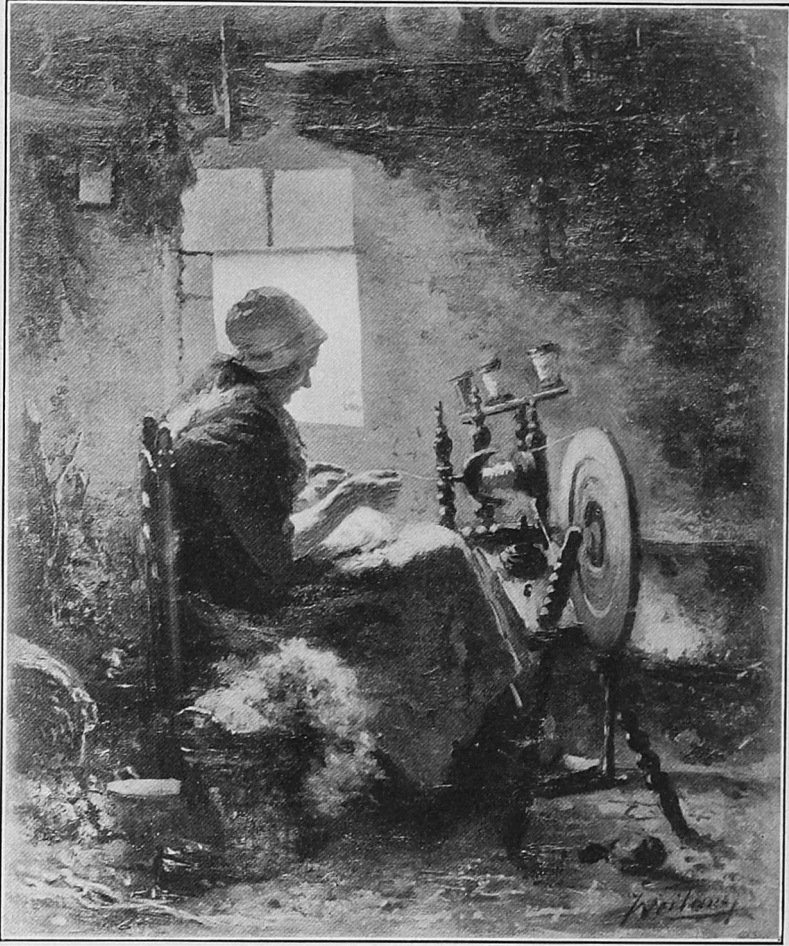
SALON OF THE DILETTANTI—X

THE DUMP OF THE DOLEFUL DUTCH

A bald-faced brute of an Englishman once asked, with more pertinence than propriety, why all Americans married Lillian Russell? And now had come a dolt from Dordrecht who wanted to know, with a preposterous parade of patriotic pride unwarranted by the merits of the case, why all Americans bought Dutch pictures. The answer to both questions, the Collector said, was terse and positive—*they didn't*. It was true that quite a bunch of Americans *had* married Lillian Russell, and it was equally true that a considerably larger percentage of the American public *had* bought Dutch pictures; but *all*—God forbid, ejaculated the Collector. There *was* a saving remnant of the native born who coveted neither the charming actress of many names, nor the charmless art of a single theme.

Single? Well, perhaps that was too sweeping an assertion, admitted the Collector; but, with the license allowed to positive speech, it wasn't so far wrong, after all. Look at the stock output of the modern Dutch school. The landscape men eliminated—as in justice they should be—wasn't the work of the whole lot a soulless, senseless harping—for dollars and cents—

on a single chord, a chord to which actually the great American public was by instinct unresponsive? Those eternal poverty pictures depicting a lot, both intellectual and physical, against which every true American heart splenored. Those cottage interiors, all alike, betokening neither taste



DUTCH INTERIOR
By Weiland

nor culture, scarcely evidencing creature comforts, with an implied cleanliness as their sole redeeming characteristic. Those stolid faces, without an idea, emotionless, stupid. Those habiliments of penury, of a cut that came down from the year of one—according to Dutch chronology. A sorry type of abode; a sordid, though perhaps thrifty, class of people; a poverty of intellect and spirit hard to reconcile with the idea of good



MY OWN OLD PLACE — DUTCH INTERIOR
By Josef Israëls



INTERIOR, NORTH BRABANT
By B. J. Blommers

citizenship; contentment with abject conditions that found its false excuse in rooted, stereotyped custom and lack of normal ambition; in a word, the witness of a life out of tune with the age, a condition of mind and body that the combined forces of present-day civilization were striving to eradi-



DUTCH INTERIOR
By Albert Neuhuys

cate—this was the stock in trade of the average Dutch painter: an art stamped with commercialism, executed for selling purposes, and fostered by the trade for the ends of gain.

The Collector thought it was deplorable. Had Dutchmen nothing better to harp on? Was Holland so devoid of the “artistic” that its painters were obliged, perforce, to reiterate the presentment of an admittedly unattractive, if not unworthy, phase of their national life? Cut out the old-timers—Rubens, Rembrandt, Hals, and the like—who *did* see beauty in things beautiful, as well as in things unlovely; side-track men

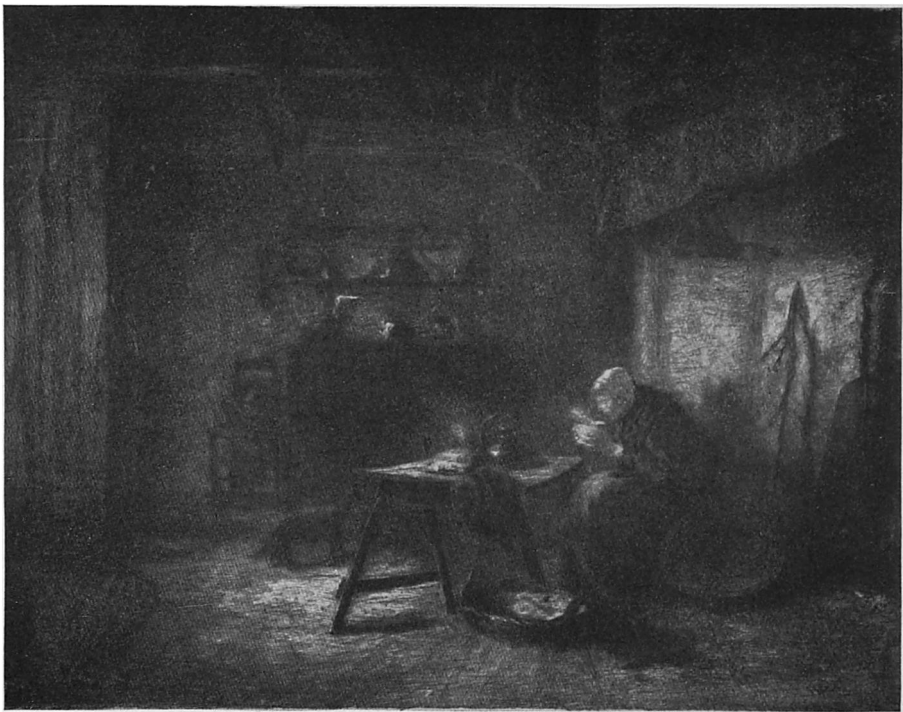
like Mauve, Weissenbruch, the Marises, and certain others, who saw glory in sea, sky and sward; and what did you have? Judging from the truck brought over to this country by the acre, you had just this: A bunch of painters who apparently thought the American public had gone daft on Dutch interiors! This was an assumption really unwarranted by facts.



THE YOUNG MOTHER — DUTCH INTERIOR

By Albert Neuhuys

In the Collector's opinion, the average Dutch interior in art—and thousands of them have been peddled about in this country—was a good deal like olives at dinner or garlic in soups—an acquired taste. In the interest of more worthy themes he would like to see taste rejuvenated, gravitated a different way. He recalled Horace Greeley's remark, when asked if he approved of guano as a dressing for potatoes. It might do, the sage replied, for those whose taste had been vitiated with rum and



A HUMBLE MEAL — DUTCH INTERIOR
By Josef Israëls



BRABANT INTERIOR
By B. J. Blommers



INTERIOR, NORTH BRABANT
By Charles P. Gruppe

tobacco, but he preferred pepper and salt! Why not have a little pepper and salt—the *real* beauties of Holland—dished up to us in place of the dope that had been so extensively delivered in this country as characteristic “Dutch art”?

The fact was that it was *not* characteristic Dutch art, in its noteworthy phase. The epidemic of Dutch interiors that had broken out on the art of the Netherlands was a sort of rash, like measles, for whose contagion commercialism was largely responsible. Some one—Heaven forgive him!—invaded the dismal dens in the name of Art, and the first Dutch interiors sold more from novelty than from intrinsic interest or merit. It only needed a start and the proper push, and the thing became a vogue. Then Israëls, Kever, Blommers, Neuhuys, Pieters, the whole catalogue of them, big fellows and little fellows alike, got busy. Each tried his hand—and not his ‘prentice hand either, as Bobbie Burns puts it—at the beloved cottages, till one might suppose from the sustained activity of the picture-makers that Dutch interiors had become the slogan of studio and salesroom from Schiermonnik Oog to Munsterbilsen.

They were all alike, this grist of somber canvases; why shouldn’t they be? The models the men painted were all the same. In architecture—a crude makeshift, something calculated to keep in the heat and keep out the rain, always unadorned, with one window, high-placed. In

furnishings—one table, one, sometimes two, chairs; more than often a cradle—cradles were much in demand among the Dutch peasants; occasionally, a spinning wheel. In costume—a strictly utilitarian garb, always of the same material and the same color, no waste of goods. In occupation—main figure, if busy, peeling potatoes, scraping carrots, or knitting; if not, simply vacuous. Personages—usually one woman, though male companions were permissible; if the woman were young or in her prime, always look for a child somewhere in the picture. This wasn't a prearranged recipe or formula for a Dutch interior, it was a succinct generalization from observed canvases.

To call this intrinsically uninteresting product of pot-boiling characteristic Dutch art, the Collector said, was to admit that Dutch art had run to seed—or worse. It was to reflect on the achievements of the men who had seen beauties worth recording—and Holland had produced such men. It was to make Dutch artists a horde of picture-manufacturers, self-copyists, duplicators of sordid scenes in muddy tones. Suppose, the Collector said, that Ochtman, Murphy, Ranger, Crane, Groll, Bogert, Redfield, Jones, Tarbell, Schofield, Brush, and a score or more other American painters were all taken with the same fever—or divine inspiration—and set



THE PANCAKE — DUTCH INTERIOR
By Josef Israëls

out to paint a typical room in Poverty Row—as above described—or the interior of the same hut in Shantytown; suppose they produced pictures



THE MOTHER — DUTCH INTERIOR
By Albert Neuhuys

by the dozen so nearly alike that you would have to label each pea to know which pod it came out of; and suppose, if you please, that each used the whole mastery of his art in the depiction of the same paltry scene—would

the astute American connoisseurs buy? Well, hardly. Then why should they welcome and put their money into congested invoices of similar work from the other side, simply because it was Dutch art? Character and quality of output should count for something. Would not our native artists feel piqued and humiliated by the monotonous hash and rehash of the same typical room in Poverty Row, or of the same old hut in Shantytown? And should not the lights of the Dutch school feel rebuked by the recurrence of the same old grist—like the sea-sick Scotchman who was less racked by the retchings of nausea than by the consciousness that he had eaten nothing but “plain parritch”?

America, the Collector said, had for many a year been the dump of the doleful Dutch, and at the same time Americans had poked fun at the *genre* paintings—of higher quality and superior interest—of the English artists. Prejudice on the one side and puffery on the other? Perhaps. At any rate, many of the painters of the British Isles—as witness the canvases of the Glasgow school recently exhibited in this country—had been doing masterful work, varied in character, rich in color, superb in technique. But who had been their apostles and advertisers? On the other hand, who hadn't been solicitors and salesmen for the modern Dutch—especially the precious, blocked-out-by-prescription Dutch interior, with its dense folk and dolorous import?

But, after all, there was no accounting for tastes, the Collector said, no explaining of fads and fashions. The bell wether led the flock, and the lambs left the slopes for the shambles. Many of them, of course, kicked when they got there, but the bell wether was inexorable. He had been inexorable in the case of the ground-out-to-meet-demand poverty pictures of the modern Dutchmen, as was evidenced by the fact that the Dutchmen were kept busy and the supply never faltered. Would it falter? asked one of the Dilettanti. Ask the bell wether if he can control the lambs, not the Dutchmen if they are willing to keep at the mill, replied the Collector, sententiously.

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